



Wolters Kluwer
Health

Wolters Kluwer Health Q1 Poll: Self-Diagnosis

New Poll Series Explores Consumer Perspectives on Healthcare Changes at the Point of Care

Wolters Kluwer Health introduces a new quarterly poll series probing the changes taking place in healthcare and the impact on both healthcare professionals and consumers at the point of care. The first poll in this series looks at the perceptions of and practices around using online resources and information to answer medical questions as well as exploring consumer self-diagnosis habits. Poll findings reveal how the Internet is changing the way consumers are accessing health-related information and using online resources to assess their own conditions and inform their relationships with medical professionals.

Featured Finding: Consumers Trust Online Information about Their Own Health

Despite skepticism around changes happening in the healthcare industry, a majority of survey respondents who turn to the internet for medical information report having a high degree of trust in online medical information. Findings show that consumers believe easier access to online medical information has made them better informed as patients, impacting their interactions and relationships with physicians.

Key Findings:

[Consumer Trust](#)

[Impact on Doctor-
Patient Relationship](#)

[Verifying
Self-Diagnosis](#)

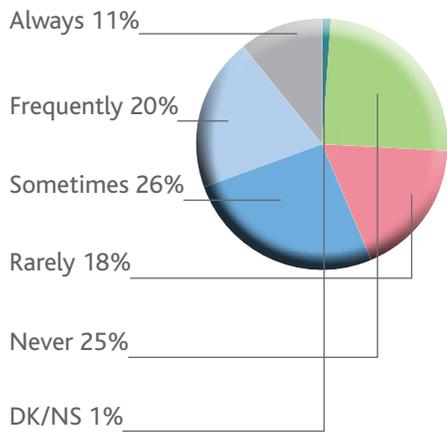
[Internet vs. Doctor](#)

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CONSUMERS TRUST ONLINE HEALTH INFORMATION TO INFORM THEMSELVES AND SELF-DIAGNOSE

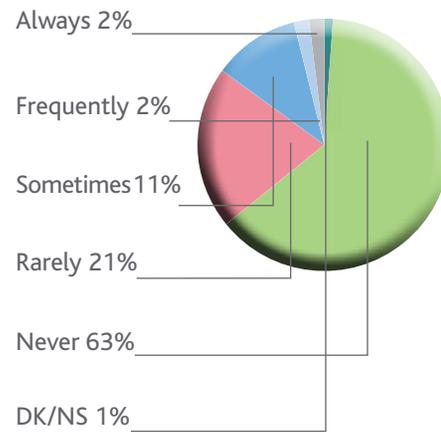
Poll findings confirm that a majority of consumers are not only turning to the Internet to find answers to their medical questions, but they trust the information they find and are using it successfully to self-diagnose. In fact, a significant number claim to have never misdiagnosed themselves.

Frequency of Internet Use for Medical Questions



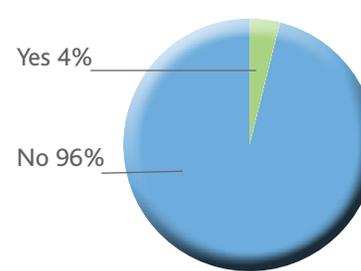
Question: How often do you turn to the Internet to find answers to medical questions?

Frequency of Misdiagnosing



Question: How often would you say you have misdiagnosed yourself when using online medical resources to diagnose your symptoms versus seeking a doctor's professional diagnosis?

Prevalence of 'Cyberchondria'



Question: The term 'cyberchondria' was coined to describe how people become convinced that they have an illness or condition they don't have based on all of the information they read on the Internet. Based on this definition, have you ever experienced cyberchondria?

Poll Points:

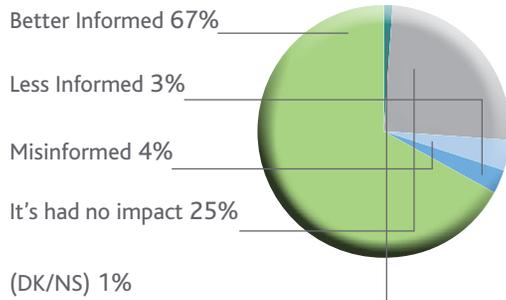
- Three out of ten Americans say they "always" or "frequently" turn to the internet to find answers to their medical questions.
- Nearly two-thirds of Americans (65%) who turn to the internet with medical questions say they trust the information they find.
- A majority of consumers with college and advanced degrees (70%) trust medical information found on the internet.
- Among Americans who seek medical information on the internet, nearly two-thirds (63%) say they have never misdiagnosed themselves.
- Among all Americans surveyed, only 4% say they believe they have experienced 'cyberchondria' – a term coined to describe how people become convinced that they have an illness or condition they don't have based on all of the information they read on the Internet.

HOW ACCESS TO ONLINE MEDICAL INFORMATION IMPACTS THE DOCTOR-PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

Both consumers and physicians cite benefits from patients having greater access to online medical information, including better informed patients. Physicians reported in an earlier survey that misinformed patients are one of the most common barriers to good doctor-patient communication. Interestingly, a majority of consumers report they never misdiagnose themselves, and physicians report having changed an initial diagnosis based on information from online resources.

Physicians' perspectives were collected during a separate Wolters Kluwer Health 2011 Point of Care survey of more than 300 U.S. physicians.

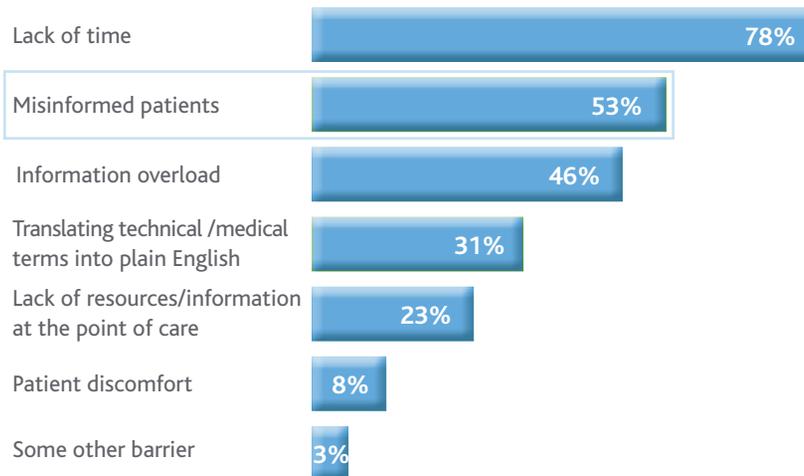
Impact of Access to Online Medical Information



* Consumer poll data

Question: Do you feel that easier access to medical information online has made you as a patient...?

Challenges to Doctor-Patient Communication



* Physician survey data

Question: What are the most common barriers to good doctor-patient communication?

Poll Points:

Consumer poll:

- Two-thirds of Americans (67%) who seek medical information on the internet say that easier access to this information online has made them better informed as patients.
- Among Americans who seek medical information on the internet, nearly two-thirds (63%) say they have never misdiagnosed themselves when using online medical resources.
- Only 15% of Americans who turn to the internet for medical information say they at least sometimes misdiagnose themselves.

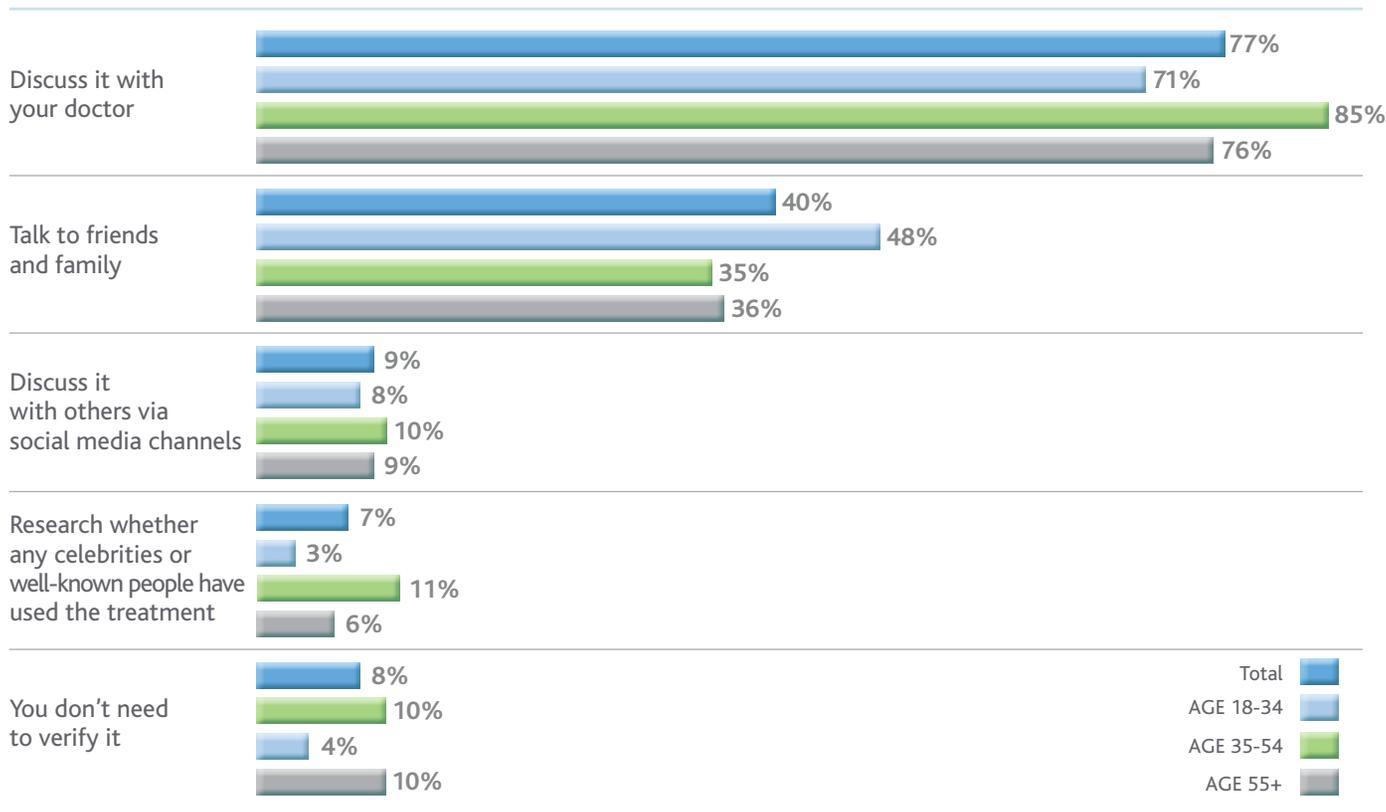
Physician survey:

- Nearly nine in 10 physicians feel that improved access to online medical information and resources has improved the quality of care at their practice.
- Only 12% of physicians believe patient access to online medical information has impeded the quality of care they provide.
- A majority, 63%, of physicians report having changed an initial diagnosis based on new information accessed via online resources/support tools.

VERIFYING SELF-DIAGNOSIS

While consumers report success in self diagnosing an illness using online medical information sources instead of seeking a doctor’s professional diagnosis, they also tend to follow up with a doctor to verify their diagnosis.

Steps After Diagnosing Illness Online



Question: When you find information online to help you diagnose or treat an illness, which of the following steps do you typically take to verify your diagnosis or treatment plan?

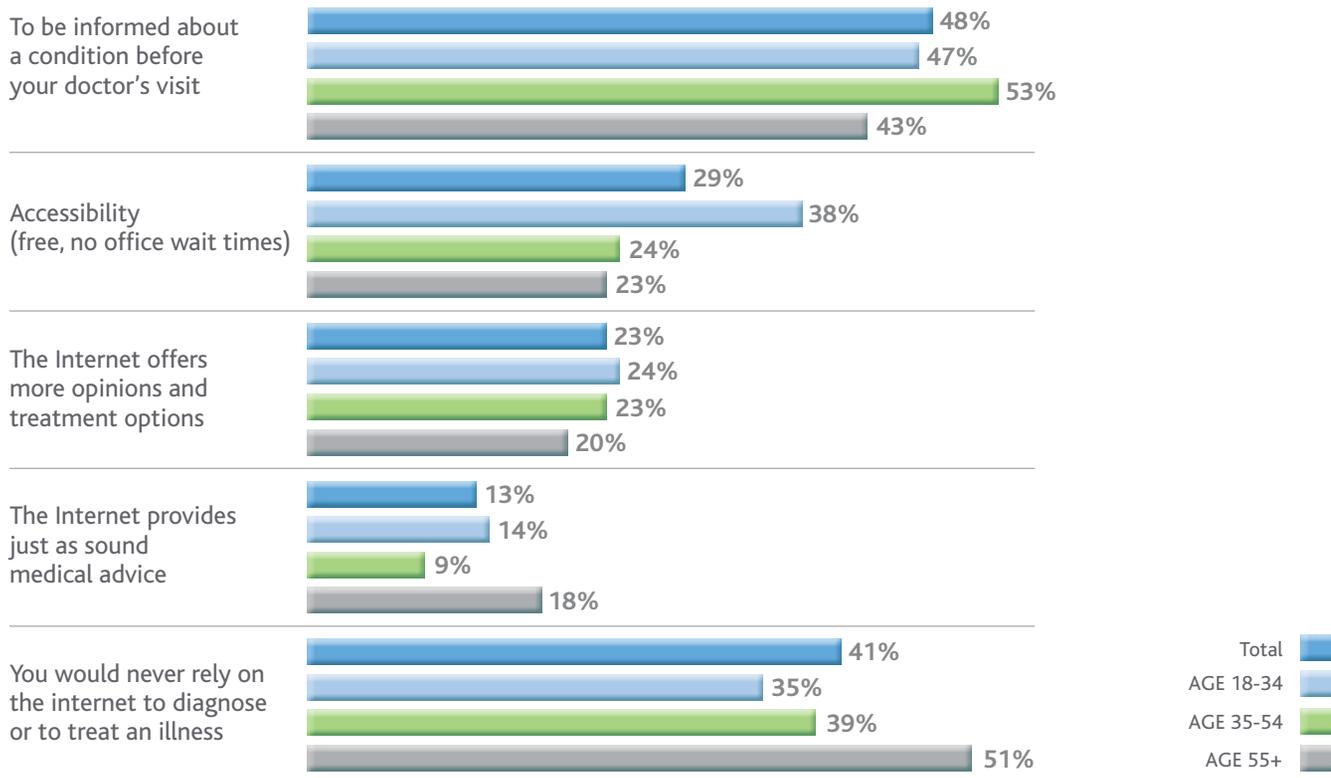
Poll Points:

- A majority of consumers (77%) who use the internet to diagnose an illness say they follow up with a doctor to verify that diagnosis.
- Only 8% of consumers believe that verifying a self-diagnosis with a doctor is unnecessary.
- 40% of consumers prefer talking to friends and family to verify a self-diagnosis. Interestingly, consumers are not yet using social media channels to help verify their self diagnoses or treatment plans.

CONSUMER REASONS FOR USING THE INTERNET VS. VISITING A DOCTOR

Consumers cite a number of reasons for why they rely on the Internet to diagnose or treat an illness, including being better informed before their doctor visit and finding online information easier to access.

Reasons for Relying on Internet vs. Visiting Doctor



Question: Which of the following best describes why you would rely on the Internet versus visiting a doctor to diagnose or treat an illness?

Poll Points:

- Almost half (48%) of consumers rely on the internet to be informed before a doctor's visit.
- More than a third of younger Americans (ages 18 to 34) cite accessibility as to why they go to the internet first for medical information.
- 18% of older consumers (ages 55 plus) believe the internet can provide just as sound advice as a physician.
- Almost a quarter of consumers believe the internet offers more opinions and options than a single healthcare provider.